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Anna Heller, *'Les bêtises des Grecs'. Conflits et rivalités entre cités d'Asie et de Bithynie à l'époque romaine (129 a.C.-235 p.C.)*. Scripta Antiqua 17. Bordeaux: Ausonius Éditions, 2006. Pp. 425. ISBN 2-910023-74-5. €38.00.

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'Le gloire et la haine' were -- in Louis Robert's famous words -- the emotions that dominated the relations between the Greek city states even during the Roman Empire. The well-known struggle between Nikaia and Nikomedeia in the Roman province of Bithynia et Pontus, which led Robert to coin the above-mentioned phrase, was far from being exceptional. Even during the civil wars of the third century the struggle for glory and the hate towards any rival city made the poleis opt for the enemy of the emperor or would-be-emperor supported by 'the other place'. Although these rivalries were essential for city identities, at least some members of the urban elite had to face the disdain the Romans felt for something they perceived as a quarrel for 'the donkey's shadow' (Dion Chrys., Or. 34.48-51; Aristid., Or. 23.60-63; Or. 27.44).

These powerful voices of the Second Sophistic together with the modern idea of the dying polis after Chaironeia led to a very unfavourable picture of city rivalries in modern scholarship. That is the starting point for Anna Heller's book, a revised version of her doctoral thesis, directed by Jean-Louis Ferrary and submitted to the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 2002. Following Louis Robert and Maurice Sartre,¹ she tries to prove on a much larger scale that these city rivalries had an eminent political character and were by no means fights for empty titles (15). Her way of doing so is to analyse the impact of Roman rule on these conflicts and to show that there was great continuity in the evolution of the inter-polis relationships (16-17). Summing up before going into the details I would like to emphasise that she does this successfully.

Of course it is impossible to study the world of contending poleis in all the Greek provinces of the Roman Empire in just one thesis. So Heller limits her analysis to Asia and the western part of the double province of Bithynia et Pontus. There are many good reasons for this, not the least of which is the fact that only in Asia are there enough traces of the slowly-growing impact of Roman rule, from the time when it was just the strongest power among the neighbours to the time of the empire. The evidence from these provinces leads Heller to confine her study to the period prior to the death of Alexander Severus (AD 235). That means that the interesting phase of the so-called soldier emperors that particularly affected the rivalries of the cities in Macedonia and southern Asia minor is only touched upon in some passing comments.²

In addition to an introduction (13-21), conclusion (343-377), four appendices (379-393), a rich bibliography (395-403), indices (405-418), and three tables and four maps, the book is divided into three main parts dealing with conflicts over territory (23-122), struggles for privileges (125-237) and the rivalries concerning titles (241-341).

The first main part ('Les conflits liés au territoire') is divided into three chapters dealing with the period of the establishment of the Roman province of Asia before the Mithridatic wars, the epoch of the Mithridatic and civil wars, and finally the imperial period. The aim is to show continuities from pre-provincial conflicts via late republican to imperial times.

The first chapter ('Avant les guerres mithridatiques, dans la continuité', 27-56) does so first by demonstrating that some of the conflicts over Priene and its neighbours extended back into pre-provincial times (27-44). Subsequently Heller shows that third-party arbitration and even violent raids continued during the early provincial period (45-56). The heading of the second subsection ('La sympolitie et ses enjeux cachés') is a little bit stilted. Given Heller's inclination to detailed analyses of matters that are not the main focus of the chapter, this title is somewhat misleading.

The early provincial period until Caesar is the topic of the second chapter ('Le temps des guerres et ses conséquences', 57-83). A very interesting analysis of the territorial conflicts in the region around Kolophon (and Metropolis) shows the change in Rome's methods of handling inter-polis conflicts. Instead of arranging third-party arbitration the Romans now made decisions for themselves, and rewarded 'friends' at the expense of their neighbours (57-65). The second section of this chapter moves to the period of the Mithridatic wars and to a more sophisticated system of rewarding the friends of Rome by way of the so-called *attributio* (65.71): these friends did not get their neighbours' territories any more but the right to levy tributes there instead, as the cases of Stratonikeia and Kaunos show.³ This was much easier to grant -- and also easier to revoke, if the 'friend' did something that Rome did not approve of. This is convincing, but the Pseudo-Julianic letter 198 (Bidez) on Argos and Corinth should be left aside: as Anthony Spawforth rightly emphasizes,⁴ the letter deals with payments concerning *venationes*, presumably in connection with the imperial cult.

Notwithstanding the invention of the *attributio*, even in the Third Mithridatic War and during the civil wars faithful followers sometimes did receive large territorial gains as the third section highlights (71-83). New criteria for territorial (and other) grants emerged: with the preponderance of 'big men' in late Republican politics, personal (Mithridates of Pergamon) or mythological (Ilion, the home of Aeneas) relations with Rome's leading men (in both cases: Caesar) proved to be useful.

The third chapter ('L'Époque impériale: un apaisement fallacieux?', 85-122) presents different kinds of inter-polis conflicts in Bithynia and Asia during imperial times. Even now there were border conflicts, although they moved away from the coast to the less urbanized periphery, as Heller shows. In addition some border disputes became fundamentally economic conflicts. These could even now be settled without the engagement of Rome (if the poleis had about the same size). Nevertheless, for minor poleis Rome provided some kind of protection against their powerful neighbours.

The second main part ('Statuts privilégiés et sphères de domination') consists of two chapters dealing with the privileges of and fight for the status of being *conventus capital*

and host of a provincial temple of the imperial cult respectively.

Besides a short introduction into the function of conventus and the known assizes of Asia Minor (125-129) and a short conclusion (161-162), the fourth chapter ('Le statut de capitale de conventus: justice, fiscalité, rapports de dépendance', 125-162) is again divided into three sections. The first section (129-136) describes the cities' quest for the status of conventus capital using as examples the success of Prusa (Dion Prus., Or. 45) and the failure of Berenike (J. H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors*, Philadelphia 1989, No. 123). The second section (137-149) emphasizes the economic advantages of being conventus capital. Heller works hard to prove that the conventus capitals collected the provincial *tributa* from the poleis of their conventus and used these funds in order to achieve further gains. The results are mostly assumptions, whose vulnerability she confesses herself (143; 145-146), or mere questions (146). Even in Dio Chrys., Or. 38 (perhaps the strongest evidence) it remains uncertain what kind of *phoros* was really meant. The third section (149-162) tries to prove that the cities understood the relationship between conventus capital and the other cities of the conventus as a relation of lord and subjects. This she does quite convincingly, although I would put the emphasis in a slightly different way: the point was more to be free of domination by others than to dominate them.

The fifth chapter ('Cultes et concours: la religion comme terrain de rivalités', 163-254) is again divided into an introduction (163-164), conclusion (236-237) and three further sections. The first section (164-179) deals with privileges concerning sanctuaries and religious festivals outside the imperial cult. By means of the famous *asylia* contest under Tiberius (165-169), the upgrading of games to iselastic festivals that provided special privileges for the winners (169-172), the special case of the Artemisia at Ephesos (172-174), the imperial confirmation of local games at Balbura and Oinoanda (174-177) and finally the (re-)naming of games after emperors ('Severeia') at Nikaia and Nikomeideia (177-179) Heller shows successfully the increasing degree of Roman involvement in the organisation of the sanctuaries and games in Asia Minor. My only doubts concern her interpretation of the contests at Balbura and Oinoanda. The confirmations requested by the emperor for festival foundations of Meleager at Balbura and Demosthenes at Oiononanda are easily explained by the vulnerability of both the foundations and the finances of the affected city.⁵ That the Balburans in their petition to Antoninus Pius cited the precedent at Oinoanda in order to show what they wanted was only natural: the only case they knew well enough to quote it as precedent was the one in their neighbourhood. Besides, Heller is not up to date here. Four inscriptions published by Hall and Milner show that the Meleagreia of Oinoanda were financed ὑπὸ οὐσίας Μελεαγρίδος.⁶ That suggests a foundress named Meleagris. The second section (179-210) concerns three aspects of the provincial imperial cult: the granting of provincial games in honour of the emperor, of provincial temples (from Domitian onwards including the title 'neokoros') and of the title of metropolis. Regarding the latter Heller offers an attractive new explanation: it seems to be something like the icing on the cake for those who had obtained all the other privileges concerning the provincial imperial cult.

The third section (210-236) analyses the cities' competition for the title of *neokoros*, basically by means of the increasing rivalries between the 'big three' (Ephesos, Pergamon, and Smyrna) during their quest for their first to third *neokoros* and their proclamation of the newly acquired titles.

The third main part ('Rivaliser en mots et en images') is divided in two chapters concerning the emergence of standard honorific titles, with specific attention to, on the one hand, the *neokoros*, and, on the other hand, the titles of 'metropolis' and 'first'.

The sixth chapter ('Célébrer le statut de néocore: l'origine des titulatures honorifiques dans la province d'Asie', 241-282) tackles the role of *neokoros* in honorific city titles.

After a short introduction (241-243) the first section (243-254) deals with the emergence of the title at Ephesos at the end of the first century AD. Following S. Friesen,⁷ Heller tries to prove the leading role of the koinon in singling out a candidate by using a group of dedications to the emperor Domitian erected by various cities of the province of Asia. That may be right, but the evidence is rather scanty. At least concerning the dedications one important question remains open: why were these inscriptions put up in different years if they were the result of a joint decision by the koinon (249)? That the inscription *I. Ephesos* 236, which of course is different in not being a dedication to Domitian, should be later than the aforementioned group because it differs in the use of titles (254-255) sounds a little bit like *petitio principii* on the hypothesis that they all had to be identical. Despite this flaw the second section (254-268) successfully demonstrates the increasing spreading and intensification of *neokoros* titles in Asia. The thrilling analysis of the acquisition and use of the third *neokoros* title by Pergamon, Smyrna and especially Ephesos in the third section (269-282) finally leads to the insight that at this point the most important aspect of this acquisition was merely the augmentation of the cities' title.

The following chapter (283-341) is dedicated to the other two important titles, 'metropolis' and 'first'. These were not as closely defined as *neokoros*, and invited different meanings and ambiguities. The first section (284-305) demonstrates that besides what Heller calls the 'official meaning' of the title 'metropolis', there was the more general sense of 'most important city of a region'. An interesting finding is the fact that in Asia there existed several metropoleis, where the word had various meanings and additions, while in Bithynia et Pontus Nikomedeia successfully monopolized this title. The second section (305-341) deals with the use of primacy in city titles and the meaning of the word 'first'. Again there were many different ways in which this title could be used by the cities (such as 'first of the province' and 'first in respect of beauty and greatness'). And again in Bithynia et Pontus Nikomedeia was named metropolis (314-324), while in Asia the big three developed sophisticated titles simply to establish primacy in at least one part of their title (324-332).

In conclusion, Heller has written a learned book on an important but complicated matter. Her strength lies in the detailed analysis of sources, which unfortunately sometimes causes her to lose track of the thread of her argument. Nevertheless she successfully demonstrates the continuities from Hellenistic territorial conflicts to the quarrels over titles. These often implied the material gains Heller emphasizes, perhaps a bit too much. I would stress as well the importance of civic identities, which made city titles not mere titles but symbolic capital for all citizens of the respective polis.

All in all, while not easy reading, *Les bêtises des Grecs* is a good and interesting book.

Notes:

1. L. Robert, 'La titulature de Nicée et de Nicomédie: la gloire et la haine', *HSCPh* 81, 1977, 1-39 = *OMS* VI, Paris 1989 211-249; M. Sartre, *L'Orient Romain*, Paris 1991, 192.
2. For southern Asia Minor see especially P. Weiss, 'Auxe Perge. Beobachtungen zu einem bemerkenswerten städtischen Dokument des späten 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.', *Chiron* 21, 1991, 353-392; R. Ziegler, *Städtisches Prestige und kaiserliche Politik. Studien zum Festwesen in Ostkilikien im 2. und 3. Jh. n. Chr.*, Düsseldorf 1985. Notable also is the interesting 'career' of Thessalonica in the middle of the third century: R. Ziegler, 'Thessalonike in der Politik des Traianus Decius und der Tod des Philippus Arabs', in: M. Wissemann (ed.), *Roma renascens. Beiträge zur Spätantike und Rezeptionsgeschichte. Ilona Opelt von ihren Freunden und Schülern zum 9.7.1988 in Verehrung gewidmet*, Frankfurt 1988, 385-414. See now also -- on the whole Greek East but with limitation to the *neokoroi* -- the monumental work B. Burrell, *Neokoroi. Greek Cities and Roman Emperors*, Leiden 2004.
3. On Kaunos and Kalynda see now Ch. Marek, *Die Inschriften von Kaunos*, München 2006, 89-90 and 99 also with a new testimony on the quarrel with Rhodes: inscription no. 90.
4. A. J. S. Spawforth, 'Corinth, Argos and the Imperial Cult: Pseudo-Julian, Letters 198', *Hesperia* 63, 1994, 211-232.
5. On the emperors concern for the city finances cf. inter alia M. Wörle, *Stadt und Fest im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien*, München 1988, 172-182, especially 176-177 and the recently published letters of Hadrian in G. Petzl and E. Schwertheim, *Hadrian und die dionysischen Künstler*, Bonn 2007.
6. A. Hall and N. Milner, 'Education and Athletics. Documents illustrating the Festivals of Oenoanda', in D. French (ed.), *Studies in the History and Topography of Lycia and Pisidia*, Ankara 1994, 7-47.
7. S. J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros. Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family*, Leiden/New York 1993, 29-49.

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